

NEWS RELEASE

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PROJECT WILL CLOSE ABANDONED MINES NEAR VERNON

The Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining's Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program has announced plans to close abandoned mines in the Sheeprock Mountains just south of Vernon, Tooele County. The Vernon Sheeprocks Project will close 73 shaft and adits using a variety of methods, including backfilling, bat gates, shaft grates and masonry walls.

The mines, dating back as far as the 1870s, were underground hardrock metal mines in the Columbia, Erickson and Blue Bell mining districts. Most production work ended by the World War II era, although there are still some active claims in the area. Principal commodities produced in the mines were silver, lead, zinc, gold, tungsten, iron and copper.

"The project area is on National Forest land and is cooperatively funded with the Forest Service under a Participating Agreement," said Project Manager Chris Rohrer. "While we will principally be closing old mines to protect public safety, we will also take steps to improve the watershed by keeping mine wastes from eroding into streams."

Work on the project is expected to get underway in Spring 2005, or as soon as weather permits. The public is invited to provide input or comment. "Should there be enough public interest in the project we will hold a public meeting to discuss it," notes Rohrer.

"Logistically this is a very complex project," said Rohrer. "Although most of the old mines are clustered in a few square miles, they are located in a dozen different canyons, each of which is accessed by a different road, so it seems to take forever to get anywhere." For more information, or to comment, contact Chris Rohrer at 538-5322.

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